

7 Key Questions to Ask When Buying In-Car Video

1. How many cameras can I record from simultaneously?

For some agencies an in-car video system with one camera is sufficient. However there are times you may need up to 4 camera views to capture an incident in its entirety. Ask the vendor how many cameras can record simultaneously, and at what resolution. This is important because you don't want to sacrifice image quality for maximum camera coverage.

2. What in-car data storage options does the vendor offer?

Ask the vendor if multiple storage options are available. Requirements vary from agency to agency and it's important to find a good fit. Available options include solid state hard drives, single ruggedized 2.5" hard drive and dual RAID1 hard drives. Ideally your vendor will offer all three so you will have some options to choose from.

3. Has the product been tried and tested in the field?

One of the most important questions to ask is how widely deployed the product is. Rather than asking, "What can your system do?" ask instead "What has your system done and for how many other agencies?" A system that has performed across the country in diverse environments and for agencies of all sizes has already been proven and will be a solid choice for your department. Look for a large existing installed base and a vendor who has been in the digital video arena for many years.

4. Does the vendor design and develop their own product?

If the vendor outsources their development of hardware or software you may not be getting the best available product. Look for a vendor who designs and develops their own technology, and owns all of the Intellectual Property. They will be more accountable for the quality of the product and will be better able to respond to your needs for product enhancements and customization.

5. Is the product manufactured in the United States?

A vendor who manufactures their own product in the U.S. will have far tighter control over available features, quality issues and shipping than a vendor who manufactures overseas, and will be able to respond to your needs more quickly.

6. Can the product be customized to my needs?

Some products are fixed, "out of the box" solutions which may or may not meet your specific needs. Be sure to ask the vendor if they have the capability to provide customized solutions. A vendor who "owns" their own technology should be able to work with you in developing the features or capabilities you require.

7. What type of long-term storage does the vendor offer?

Small agencies may not require a back-end server at all, and will do just fine using a single computer to store and manage their files. America's largest agencies often have distributed servers with huge data storage requirements. Ask the vendor if their storage options range from those with no server to complex, multi-server configurations.

For more information on in-car video systems, visit www.digitalpatroller.com